APRIL 1960

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The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT & OPINION

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It Is Finished

by Henry Stob

When therefore Jesus had received the vinegar, he said: "It is finished", and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit . . . . But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb . . . and behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel, and as they were affrighted, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

Ever since the events transpired of which these texts bear witness, Christians have been paying homage to him who was the center of the silent drama enacted in the presence of attending angels in a Palestinian garden at dawn.

What took place on that distant and immortal morning we know. A stone was rolled from the entrance of a sepulchre hewn out of rock, and from it emerged a man who only day before yesterday had been hanged on a cross and left there until dead.

He had heralded his own death with a cry. "It is finished," he had said and with that he had given up the ghost.

It *was* finished! By evening the whole ghastly drama was over. With the setting of the sun the shouting in the streets had died. The incensed mob had stilled its voice. The "Crucify him! Crucify him!" had done its work.

Only shortly before rude soldiers had mocked him, struck him, spit upon him. That, too, was over. The thorns no longer pressed upon his brow, the stripes pained no more, the shackles were loosed. Gethsemane had passed, and also the betrayer's kiss. Forgotten was the sleepless vigil, the sweat as of blood, the bitterness of the cup. It was finished – all that pain and suffering and anguish.

There was no more thirst, no more fever, no more loneliness. The hatred of the people, the ridicule of the court, the mockery of the spectators, the cut of the nails, the absence of God – nothing of that was left. Death, that irresistible narcotic, had brought relief. So terrible in the offing, it had finally struck the finishing blow, mercifully summoning unconsciousness and the insensibility of the last long sleep. Jesus was dead!

We can imagine Jesus greeting Death with open arms, hailing it as a benefactor, and thanking it for release. We can imagine him crying "It is finished" in celebration of imminent oblivion. We can imagine him grateful for the ministration of mortality.

But then, I think, we should misunderstand him. For he did not *suffer* death; he *met* it; he *confronted* it with himself, and in the confrontation destroyed it. When he cried: "It is finished", it was not to summon death or to bid pain cease. It was to proclaim Death's rout.

Jesus hanging on the cross was not an *object* undergoing a process; he was a *subject* undertaking a work. The cross bore no passive victim; it bore an active redeemer. There was a battle going on in Golgotha – not with, but against, mortality. Death was not Christ's friend and saviour; it was his foe. That foe he came to slay. He slew it by yielding; won life by losing it.

It is the paradox of Calvary that on Good Friday Death died in its hour of apparent triumph, and Life and Immortality were born. The "It is finished" was in Jesus' mouth not a despairing sigh but a paean of victory and as such the harbinger of Easter. This means that Easter was born on Good Friday. The resurrection was sown on Golgotha. It was the cross that dislodged the stone at the mouth of the grave. There was a divine necessity and an altogether gracious inevitability in our Saviour's rising. The resurrection was the fruit of a battle fought and won.

This is the awful glory of this season. Lent and its culminating days remind us that it is not merely this or that word of Jesus, not merely the contagion of his personality, not merely the enchantment of his exemplary life, but especially his death that makes him universally and eternally significant.

But, again, not his death as a mere empirical fact, but his death as a divine revelation. It is not so much that Christ died that is significant, but that in a world where all men die, this death was of cosmic significance, that in a world where death was a curse, this death was the gateway to Life.

In and by this death the gates of heaven were swung open, and life and hope were secured for men lost in death and despair. Of this Easter is the witness. Of this the living Christ is the blessed surety.

Religious Myths in West Africa

by Harry R. Boer

In 1938 H. Bergema, the Dutch mission leader, wrote a remarkable doctoral dissertation for the Free University, Amsterdam, entitled *De Boom des Levens in Schrift en Historie* (The Tree of Life in Scripture and in History). A perusal of the beautifully illustrated material that is presented shows how large a part the tradition of the tree of life has played in universal religious mythology. This is a striking instance, but at the same time only one of many, of the correspondence that has been found between the Genesis account and the religious traditions of mankind. The science of Comparative Religion has established beyond any shadow of doubt a clear correspondence between the scriptural creation account and the religious beliefs of peoples who have never had this account in their possession.

This fact no one disputes. What the fact *means* is quite another story. A student who accepts as authoritative the writings of Scripture will see in them a revelation from God concerning the origins of the world and of mankind. There will be and there are questions about the literalness and the figurativeness of the account, but there will be no question about its religiously authoritative character. The unbelieving scholar, on the other hand, will consider the Scripture account as just another of the many extant accounts that deal with the coming into being of the world and of religious man in that world. An outstanding example of the latter is Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough,* a twelve-volume work setting forth a comprehensive study of ancient cults and folklore.

In 1871 there was published in Britain a monumentally significant work on primitive religion entitled *Primitive Culture* (two volumes) written by the distinguished anthropologist William Burnett Tylor. It gave standing to a theory on the rise of religion that held undisputed sway in the world of scholarship for more than a generation. The theory is called *Animism* from the Latin word *anima* (soul), and derives from the idea that primitive man considers all of nature to be possessed of souls and governed by souls. Not least do men have souls, and these continue on in existence after death. This leads to the fear and later to the worship of ancestors. Animals, trees, birds, rocks, pools, rivers, and so much more — all is animated and is strangely charged with power to do good and bad. As some souls or spirits come to stand out in significance there develops the idea of polytheism, and in the onward march of the human spirit this leads eventually to monotheism of which Christianity is the highest expression.

What has brought Animism and subsequent theories into disrepute is the remarkable discovery that among nearly all primitive people there is found a belief in a Supreme Being who is single and is regarded as the Creator of heaven, earth, and men. Especially the Roman Catholic ethnologist Pater Wilhelm Schmidt has done a great deal of work in this direction.

It is very interesting to work in this great West Africa and discover how very true the contention of Schmidt and many other anthropologists is regarding primitive belief in one supreme God. It has been countered that this belief is the result of contact between primitive peoples and a higher religion, be it Christianity or Judaism or Islam. This rebuttal hardly holds, however, for the belief in a unitary divine being has been found in the most inaccessible places, among the Pigmy people of central Africa and among Australian aborigines prior to any contact on their part with a culturally or religiously higher race.

What is even more interesting is that belief in this God does not stand alone. It comes in a definite context which from a Christian point of view has all manner of significance for the vitality of the Paradise tradition. Let me enumerate a number of these as they come to expression in West African folklore and religious myth:

1. There is a prevalent tradition that in the beginning God was very near to men. There was happy intercourse between them. Man would live forever, or, if he died, he would live again. Moreover, life was pleasant, it had no pain. Food was had in abundance. Then, one day, something tragic happened. At the center of the tragedy stands a woman. Now God is far from man, there is pain and suffering in the world. How did it happen?

2. One day a woman was (in the typical African fashion) pounding food in her mortar with a pestle. God, who was regarded as the sky, was very low and close to the earth. As the woman pounded she lifted her pestle high and hit God with it. She asked God to move a little higher, but she continued to hit him, and he continued to move higher and higher until he was far away. Now the sky (God) is far from us.

3. One day a certain woman was returning from work in the bush. She was hungry and expressed the wish that when she should get home there

would be food ready for her. When she reached home she found food lying in her water pot, ready for her to eat. She took the food, ate it, but left the calabash unwashed from which she had taken the food. God sent his son to take the calabash and the boy finding it unwashed and the food hardened, tried to pick out bits to eat with his finger nails. Some sharp pieces got under his nails, gave him pain, and he died. Therefore God drew himself up to heaven and remained distant from then on.

4. When God was thus far away people sought his help but could no longer find it. However, they found representatives of God associated with certain trees, pools of water, stones, and other objects or places, and these are now worshiped to secure God's help. Thus both God's distance and his existence is accounted for, as well as holy places and idolatry.

5. When God made man he did not want him to suffer. Therefore he gave man all the food he wanted to eat without having to work for it. Men just took hoes to the farm, put them where they wanted the farm to be dug and the crops to grow, and went away. The next day they would go back and would find a big field had been worked by the hoes in their absence and all the food waiting for them that they wanted. The hoes, however, would not work if there was anyone on the farm.

Then one day a newly married woman went to the field and took a hoe and began to dig to test whether she could work with the hoe. Then she went home. From that time on the heavenly God stopped the hoes from working on the farm by themselves because, he said, people prefer to work themselves; let them therefore hold their own hoes and work their own gardens. So now man has to work for his food. It is no longer free and man must suffer before he eats.

6. Very interesting are the chameleon and lizard stories. I give here two versions of the same theme:

(a) When God was in heaven after he had made the earth and mankind on it, he sent a chameleon to the earth to tell people that if they should die they would live again, but if the moon dies it will not live again. While God was telling the chameleon this, a lizard was standing behind a tree overhearing it. When the chameleon left for the earth to bring this news, the lizard followed him and passed him. He told men that if a man dies he will die forever, but if the moon dies it will live again. People believed the lizard, and so it happens that people now die and do not return, but the moon comes back after it has died.

(b) In the beginning God permitted men to live again if they died. People were very happy to hear this news, and they sent a chameleon to tell God how happy they were that they would not have to die forever. But the lizard ran more quickly than the chameleon and told God that people were not happy at all with the news they had heard because the world would not take them if they came back from the dead. When the chameleon arrived with the true reaction of men to the news of their return from the dead, God told him that he had already agreed with the word of the lizard and would not change it.

I AM UNABLE TO VOUCH for the antiquity of all these stories. The ones that I have here related, however, I have not found primarily in books but I have heard them from Africans as true accounts of beliefs held by the tribes from which they come before Christianity reached them. In important respects they are borne out by Geoffrey Parrinder's book *West African Religion*. They seem in one form or another to belong to the folklore of the Sudanese negroes.

What we seem to be able to distill from these and similar accounts is that:

(a) The world was made by a supreme God.

(b) In the beginning this God was close to men, but he is so no longer.

(c) In the beginning man's situation was a happy one, but it has changed for the worse.

(d) God meant that man should live and not die.

(e) A woman is associated with the beginning of man's misery.

These basic data in West African religion point to the vitality of the Paradise tradition. The clarity of the Genesis account and the variations, distortions, and local color in the folklore deposit seem to point to the difference between a tradition preserved in its integrity and one made the victim of a fantasy that has no guiding line to retain contact with the original. One is impressed in all contact with primitive religion by the boundless fantasy that enters into religious thought. "They became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened."

When the Westerner reads an account like this he is apt to look with condescension and pity on the "poor African." Let us remember that the Gospel alone has set *us* free from similar misconceptions; that the Celtic, Frankish and Germanic tribes from which we come had as foolish notions as primitive peoples have, and that belief in the power or efficacy of the rabbit's foot, broken mirrors, black cats, four-leaf clover, Friday the thirteenth, leaning ladders, and the like is by no means dead among us. And perhaps the cosmology of the African, held in all simplicity and non-scientific awareness, is preferable to the profound folly of scientists and philosophers who see no trace of God in the becoming of the world and of man.

Toward a Reformed Lent

by James O. Handley, Jr.

> Then the superstitious observance of Lent had everywhere prevailed: for both the vulgar imagined that they thereby performed some excellent service to God, and pastors commended it as a holy imitation of Christ. . . . in this splendid display they think that they serve God. I do not mention that at no time do those who would be thought the holiest of them wallow more foully. In short, the highest worship of God is to abstain from flesh, and, with this reservation, to indulge in delicacies of every kind. On the other hand, it is the greatest impiety, impiety scarcely to be expiated by death, for any one to taste the smallest portion of bacon or rancid flesh with his bread (*Institutes*, IV, 12; 20-21).

So RUNS CALVIN'S severe censure and ridicule of Lent. And perhaps during the past few weeks many of us have experienced similar reactions. Who has not noticed that the most unsavory character in the office or neighborhood suddenly turns religious every year for six weeks come Ash Wednesday? Then, not a few of us have heard some "converted Catholic" joke about the past when he used to give up peanut brittle or poker for his forty-day Lenten fast. Doubtlessly, among thousands of professing Christians this year, Lent amounted to no more than it did with "the vulgar" in Calvin's times. Superstition and form! Legalism and bondage! Yet, facing those perils, nearly all Protestant denominations in America have begun to observe some kind of a Lent since the turn of the century. In the Christian Reformed Church, for example, we officially celebrate the climactic day of Lent — Good Friday — as a special day of worship. In addition, the number of our ministers who orient their preaching to so-called "Lenten themes" multiplies by the year. Our "lay-people," too, have a developing interest in Lenten reading, as reflected in the slants of February-March-April devotional guides and in the advertising of Reformed book publishers.

While grateful for this growth of appreciation for Lent in my own denomination, I am concerned that we become more critically aware of the possible forms Lent can take. After all, there seem to be several, and they are quite different: the original Lent of the Ante-Nicene age (before 325); the Medieval Lent that was fixed by the Council of Trent; the "purged" Lent of the English and German Reformers; the "stripped-down" Lent gaining popularity in American non-liturgical churches — Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Reformed, etc. (The last form is well represented in the rather shallow but homiletically suggestive book *Values in the Church Year for Evangelical Protestantism* by W. F. Dunkle, Jr.).

Probably one of the more obvious evidences of our uncritical Lenten drift is holding Holy Communion on Good Friday. This practice appears to be slowly spreading through our churches, for it has considerable appeal: Good Friday is highlighted and our meditations on our Lord's crucifixion are intensified. Certain questions, however, need to be raised. Should not a proper observance of Good Friday aim at continuity with the historical order of the redemptive events in Holy Week? If we wish to partake of Holy Communion during that week, we should do so on the night in which our Lord instituted the Eucharist — Thursday. Does not a Good Friday Lord's Supper violate the essential nature of the Sacrament, which is communion with the living Christ? To have this Sacrament of Joy and Victory on the day Christ hung on the cross and was laid in the tomb seems profoundly improper Finally, are we not ignoring the practice of the Apostolic and Ante-Nicene churches? According to the evidences, they "ate and drank" with Christ not on Friday, but on Easter, the First Day of the new aeon of life. On that Day He who had been dead made Himself known as alive through the breaking of bread.

So, before there occurs any hardening in our Lenten observances, we need to explore, evaluate, and discuss. The first step, then, is towards more information about Lent. Such has been made available to us by the unearthing and study of many ancient documents on Christian worship, documents unknown in the Reformation era. As never before, scholars of all the major branches of Christendom have reached substantially the same conclusions about the forms and content of early Christian worship (say, roughly from A. D. 40 to 325, or the Apostolic through the Ante-Nicene periods of the church). In reference to Lent, I would like to present some of their findings, as well as my own conclusions.

CONTRARY TO POPULAR NOTION and the accumulated suspicions of Protestants, Lent is not a Roman Catholic invention. By the time the ecumenical Council of Nicea met in 325, Lent was being observed by the whole Christian church and not as a recent innovation either. Canon Five of that famous Council speaks about the times when the semi-annual synods for ratifying excommunications by the bishops should meet. We read: "And let

these synods be held, the one before Lent [literally, "before the forty-days"] that the pure Gift may be offered to God after all bitterness has been put away, and let the second be held in autumn." Another interesting reference to Lent occurs in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles,* a kind of church-order manual written in the fourth century, but recording many practices of the church in the second and third centuries:

> Brethren, observe the festival days; and first of all the Birthday which you are to celebrate on the twenty-fifth of the ninth month; after which let the Epiphany be to you the most honored, in which the Lord made to you a display of His own Godhead, and let it take place on the sixth of the tenth month; after which the fast of Lent is to be observed by you as containing a memorial of our Lord's mode of life and legislation. But let this solemnity be observed before the fast of the Passover, beginning from the second day of the week and ending at the day of preparation (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* VII, 443).

Considerable further evidence can be found in Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Athanasius, Hippolytus and Augustine to show that Lent ante-dated by centuries that religious organization known as the Roman Catholic Church.

Actually, Lent, as observed by the undivided church before Nicea, developed out of preparing catechumens for the Pascha (Pas-ka). This first and basic Christian festival has been "discovered" and understood only recently by scholars. Few of them would disagree with this description by Gregory Dix, the late Anglican liturgiologist.

> It [the Pascha] is simply the Jewish Passover feast transcended and Christianized . . . . Everywhere it is, like the Jewish Passover, a nocturnal celebration of a single night, preceded by a preparatory feast. It is simply the feast of the Christian Redemption, as the Jewish Passover was the feast of the Jewish redemption (the Exodus) . . . . The Christian Redemption was effected *by the Passion and Resurrection of Christ in combination,* viewed as a single act. There is no idea anywhere in Christendom, before the fourth century, of a separate commemoration of the Passion on Good Friday and the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, the one a day of mourning and the other of joy in our fashion (*The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus,* I, 73-74).

Even the New Testament, the supremely authoritative collection of instructions on worship, refers often to the Pascha. Paul's exhortation in II Corinthians 5 supports Dix's conclusions: "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be fresh dough, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." See also the references to Christ as the Passover Lamb in John's Gospel, Revelation, and I Peter. A. McArthur, the Scottish Reformed or Presbyterian scholar, persuasively argues from the New Testament that the Apostolic Church observed the kind of festival described by Dix (*The Evolution of the Christian Year,* pp. 77ff.).

Apparently, the early church was far more sensitive than we to the soteriological union between time, corporate worship, and sacrament, which are the principal ingredients of a "festival." Converts would be admitted into the congregations only during the Pascha, or, in case of sickness or danger of death, during the Pentecost festival. After a Saturday night vigil with the congregation until the early hours of Sunday morning, the catechumens were baptized, confirmed, and given their first experience with Christ through the Eucharist. In preparation for their paschal initiation into the Body of Christ, they had to undergo a period of instruction, fasting, alms-giving, group prayers, and renunciations of their former evil alliances. *This period of preparation was the original Lent and it was called such in the Ante-Nicene age.*

At first, Lent — this training-period for Christian initiation — lasted for only a few days, before the Pascha. Gradually, as piety will do, the period was extended to a week. As we have seen in reference to Nicea and the *Constitutions,* it had become forty days by the fourth century. The point here, however, is not the length of the preparation, but the fact and nature of it. The nature of the original Lent, then, appears to be quite different from the Lent we know today and especially observed in the Roman Catholic churches. Then it was a training period in anticipation of joyful initiation into the Body of Christ *through the Pascha;* now Lent seems to be largely penitential for those already members of the Church, reaching its climax in the mourning and lamentation of Good Friday. Of course, the Roman Catholic Church tries to maintain that the type of Lent that it practices is the original (Cardinal Lercarno, *Liturgical Dictionary,* p. 155).

According to patristic scholars, certain forces began to undermine and change the original Lent. These forces can more or less be associated with Constantine's tragic incorporation of the church into the Roman empire, 313. When the winnowing-fork of persecution disappeared, hoards of "chaff-converts" or basically uncommitted people pressed for membership in the churches; this lowered the quality of preparation for the Pascha. Ascetic reactions to the increasing conformity of the church to the world begat a very unhealthy emphasis on fasting in the fourth century. It was due to such an influence that the Lenten period was identified

with our Lord's forty-day fast in the wilderness, and Christians generally, not merely catechumens, were exhorted to imitate their Saviour by fasting during Lent. Gradually the unitive character of the Pascha was destroyed so that one worship service was held on Good Friday and another on Easter (Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy,* pp. 347-357). The final blow came when the custom of administering baptism during the Pascha passed out of use. Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., an outstanding American liturgiologist, explains the outcome: "Lent became emphasized as a penitential season of 'mourning for sin,' and the spirit of its ascetical exercises was diffused more and more with recollections of our Lord's trials and sufferings and less with anticipations of His triumphant Resurrection" (*The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary,* p. 124).

The medieval Lent, then, which Calvin attacked so vehemently, must not be identified with the Ante-Nicene or, say, pre-fourth-century Lent. Concerning the latter, his polemic is quite irrelevant, particularly when he argues against Lent based on an imitation of Christ's wilderness fast. *The original Lent did not derive from or consist in such an imitation.* Furthermore, Calvin's argument against the perpetuation of the medieval Lent by the Council of Trent (found in his tract on *True Method of Reforming the Church*) would have had more "teeth" in it if he had been able to point out the purpose and character of the earliest Lent. Scholars, however, are nearly positive that such primary sources as the *Didache, Apostolic Tradition,* and *Didascalia Apostolorum* (the three earliest extant church manuals) were not available to him.

IN CONNECTION WITH CALVIN, I would like to write a few words about the changes that the medieval Lent underwent in the hands of some of the Reformers. It needs to be said loudly that not all the leading Reformers followed Calvin in repudiating Lent. Particular mention should be made of Martin Luther and the almost as remarkable Thomas Cranmer — friendly correspondent with Calvin, university professor, theologian of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, author of the Book of Common Prayer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and martyr at the stake for his faithfulness to the Reformation. Such conservative Reformers carefully pruned accretions from the medieval Lent; such as, the blessing of palm-branch ashes and marking people with them on Ash Wednesday; required fasting; the use of the Lenten veil in the church buildings; morbid occupation with Christ's sufferings. They also revised many of the ancient prayers, Scripture readings and hymns that had become standard for corporate worship during Lent (Edward T. Horn, *The Christian Year*). Until recently, the so-called Reformed Churches have generally discredited the liturgical works of Cranmer and Luther as their "blind spots" or "failures to escape from the Pope's petticoats." Studies have revealed, however, that such men were fully as Scripture-conscious and deliberate in reforming liturgy as in reforming doctrine. Their purpose was to restore Lent, as well as each festival of the Christian Year, to its original meaning, as they understood it. They failed to do so in that they were not acquainted with the original Pascha and the Lenten preparation for it.

However, their works are preserved for us in the Episcopal and Lutheran worship manuals; such as, *The Book of Common Prayer.* In their Propers (the special prayers and Scripture readings appointed for each Sunday in Lent), one can discover many reminiscenses of the religious exercises connected with the Ante-Nicene Lent. As Shepherd observes:

> The Gospel for the first Sunday in Lent set before the candidates (the converts preparing for church membership) the Lord's own renunciation of the world, the flesh and the Devil, renunciations that they themselves would make at their baptism. Indeed, all the Lenten lessons were chosen for purposes of instruction. The Epistles, especially, set forth the great contrasts between heathen and Christian life: uncleanness versus holiness, darkness versus light, bondage versus freedom, dead works versus living service for God" (*The Worship of the Church,* pp. 109-110).

I have utilized such materials during this Lenten season and found much delight and satisfaction in doing so, both privately and publicly as the leader in the worship of a particular congregation.

I DO NOT, however, advocate that we simply "take over" the Lenten form and Propers which we as sons of the Reformation have inherited from Cranmer and Luther. Rather, I suggest that we address ourselves to such questions as these: (1) To understand the teaching of the New Testament on worship (in this case the Pascha and Lent), must we not take very seriously the early witnesses to apostolic practice, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Athanasius, *The Didache, Apostolic Tradition* and *Didascalia Apostolorum?* (2) If the N. T. is the primary rule for faith and life, must it not also be the rule for our worship, specifically for our observance of Lent, even today? (3) Is it practical and possible for us to restore the Ante-Nicene Pascha and Lent? It would involve: (a) elimination of Good Friday as a time for special concentration on the Crucifixion; perhaps it could be used along with part of Saturday for a special fast period for those about ready to join the congregations; such was very ancient practice; (b) adoption of a unitive celebration of the crucifixion and resurrection; that

is, on Saturday night we would begin a vigil-commemoration of the Cross leading without interruption into an early-morning celebration of the Resurrection; (c) initiation of all adult converts and covenant young people, if not all unbaptized infants, into the church by baptism; only *through the Pascha or Pentecost* would persons be admitted into the Body of Christ; (d) serving of the Eucharist as an integral part of the Resurrection joy on Easter Sunday morning; (e) gearing of our efforts to preparing catechumens and all the congregation for the Pascha; this would require using a six- or eight-week period preceding the Pascha. *This period would be our Lent;* only during that Lenten season would we hold special classes for profession of faith; such classes would include more than doctrinal instruction; as in the early church, the catechumens would be exercised in group prayers, acts of self-denial, alms-giving, renunciations, etc.

Two final questions would be: (4) By what methods and to what extent could we incorporate into our Lenten reform our Catechism preaching and classes, as well as the Lenten Propers (collects, Epistles, and Gospels) we have inherited from Luther and Cranmer? (5) If we undertook real Lenten reform under the direction of the Holy Spirit, would we not be opening ourselves to a rediscovery of some of the vigor and power of the early churches?

Infallibility, Scripture, and the Creed

by A. P. van Vliet

HAVING BEEN PRIVILEGED to attend Synod of 1959 as an elder delegate, I would like to present a few thoughts on a subject of extreme importance to the Christian Reformed Church. I feel something more must be said about the "infallibility issue," first as it concerns the Creed of the Church and second as it concerns the training of prospective ministers of the Gospel.

It is to be regretted that before the matter was officially dealt with by Synod, the popular press published articles on this subject. In that way a widespread unrest was created within the denomination before Synod had even an opportunity to deal with the matter in a calm atmosphere.

It is not difficult to defend the idea that the Church would have been better served if this whole matter could have been kept inside the doors of the theological Seminary and dealt with in a sphere of friendly co-operation among learned people attempting to find a solution for the divergencies of opinion. Alas, as happens so often in the history of the Church, professional theologians deemed it wise and necessary to involve the whole Church in their theoretical problems and differences of insight.

It is easy to find a motivation for such an action because every theoretical position has bearing upon the interpretation of the Creed. But a mature conviction about the *relativity* of human reasoning and of theoretical construction should make the man of science very careful *not* to involve the common believer unnecessarily in his struggle for clarification.

Now, however, the actual situation *compels* the churches to comprehend what Synod has decided for the whole denomination. For that purpose more information and explanation is needed, but without a mass of learned arguments. To add such explanation is the purpose of this brief article.

The Creed

Although "infallibility" is a *theological* term, almost every believer is quite familiar with it in its general meaning as pertaining to Holy Writ. Attention should first be focussed, therefore, on the difference between the use of the term in theology and its use in a popular, non-theoretical, creedal way.

The popular sense of the term "infallibility" directly bears upon its implicit and explicit use in the Belgic Confession: in Article III in its entirety, in Article IV first sentence, in Article V in its entirety, and in Article VII in its entirety.

This Creed, an expression of *common* belief, notes two things of importance for an understanding of the term "infallibility":

(1) The teaching of Scripture concerning its own inspiration.

(2) The Scriptural admonition to accept the Word of God as a rule for faith and practice.

From these Scripturally derived data the believer understands the *human* expression "infallibility" *without further definition.*

The Belgic Confession does not enlarge on these data. No indication is given of *how to under-*

stand inspiration. *Nothing* is said about the process of canonization of the Bible. The Creed does not take a stand with respect to the origin of the different versions of the Bible. To the contrary, it is obvious that the Belgic Confession *avoids* a call on human reasoning and just lets the Truth be heard straight from the Scripture.

One of the significant characteristics of this historical document is precisely the fact that *no attempt* is made in it to give a plausible explanation of the human side of the Bible nor to fathom the mystery of Holy Writ.

It is well known that in scientific theology, on the other hand, different conceptions are held about inspiration. While, for example, within orthodoxy the idea of organic inspiration is favored and mechanical inspiration is not accepted, even these distinctly labelled views are open to differences of conception.

The term "infallibility" rests mainly on the teaching of the Scripture about inspiration. Because there are bound to be different *scientific* conceptions of the idea of inspiration, no one ever will be able to give a *fully* satisfactory definition of infallibility.

Then there is another fact to be considered, as this matter is related to the human side of the Bible, namely, the *form* of the Bible *as it comes to us today*. The original manuscripts of the Bible books do not exist any more. There are only *copies* in the classical languages. These copies differ from each other in some respects, though not in the essential content of the message.

Then there are the translations of the Bible into the living modern languages. These translations differ from each other even within the same language, partly because they are based upon different sources, partly because of differences in interpretation, and partly because they reflect the factor of continual change in the vernacular use of the language itself. Thus various *versions* of the Bible have come into existence.

The Belgic Confession does *not* show any preference for any translation or version, nor does it refer to copies, nor even to the original manuscripts. The Creed *only* refers to the Scriptural testimony that we have to do with the *Word of God*. For the evidence of that testimony the Belgic Confession quotes the Scripture, saying that the Holy Spirit witnesses in the hearts of the believers. *That is sufficient!* No human interpretation can make more certain, nor can any term express more definitely, what we *need* to know and what we *ought* to *confess!*

Taken altogether it becomes clear so far that the *popular* creedal use and understanding of the term "infallibility" is not *theoretically* defined but rests plainly on the faithful subordination of human reasoning to the recognized divine authority of the Holy Scripture. This subordination, in turn, does not arise from human reasoning and understanding but from the witness of the Holy Spirit in the enlightened hearts and minds of the believers. It is this divine work in the soul that enables faith to grasp a spiritual understanding of the Eternal Truth far beyond that attained by human reasoning.

Theological Training

It is now in order to consider the use of the term "infallibility" in scientific theology. A theological interpretation of the term "infallibility" ought to rest fundamentally upon the same ground as given above. But because theology is science, it endeavors to define in a *theoretical* way the meaning and content of the Scriptural data:

(1) With respect to the position of Holy Writ within the context of the entire revelation (creational and written; general and special).

(2) With respect to the self-testimony of the Scripture about the origin and the divine authority of the Word.

To achieve this, certain "pre-suppositions" are indispensable for the theoretical method of research, just as axioms must be used in mathematics. Though this is open to further exposition, it may be sufficient here to state that for orthodox theology the acceptance of the infallibility of Holy Writ is required as a fundamental principle by which the method of scientific theological research is determined.

When we deal with Scriptural data related to the human side of the Bible, the *application* of the principle of infallibility is involved. That means that where the human factor, human co-operation, is considered, as it is in the receiving of the message, in its inscripturation, in copying the original handwritings, and in the translation, one has to realize to what extent infallibility (as a human conception) is to be inferred from *the self-testimony of the Scripture*. Then one is confronted with a distinction between the *content* and the *form* of Holy Writ. To put it in other words: a distinction has to be made between the *message*, the *teaching* of the Word of God, and the very letter *as it comes to us* and by which that content is transmitted.

Here it is that divergencies arise.

If we permit the *scientific* term "infallibility" to determine what Scripture teaches about the *form* and *content* of the written Word, then every conclusion we draw gets significance for the Creeds. Such a use of *human scientific comprehension* becomes in fact an endeavor to complement and to finalize the self-testimony of the Scripture by, and within the *bounds* of, human scientific conceptions. Such conceptual complementation and finalization will then illegitimately be accorded the same authority as the Holy Writ.

An eloquent evidence of this can be found in the Agenda of Synod 1959, page 293, where it is stated: "Our Reformed conceptions are not conceptions which have been added to the revelation of the Gospel as deposited in the Bible, but they are that revelation itself."

Here it is clear that *revelation* and *Reformed conceptions* are identified! The wholly unacceptable result is that *theology* through human scientific interpretation determines how we shall understand Scripture and the Creed.

THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED at Synod, supported by about sixty percent of the delegates. It is not certain, however, that every supporter was fully aware of the quintessence of the problem and of the far-reaching consequences of the decision taken, especially not when the crucial point was put in negative form and did not clearly touch the heart of the matter.

To explain this most crucial decision as it was formulated would require a dipping into the whole theological problem and debate. That is just what I have tried to avoid in this article. It is already difficult to give a simple exposition of a subject that belongs in the realm of theology and by that token should never have been brought to the judgment of the Synod until an exhaustive study had taken place.

True, there is something left for a study committee, but the mandate is a strange one in the given context. Although a definite declaration was made, it was still deemed necessary to examine the relationship between the fixed conception of infallibility and the main Scriptural ground on which the conception rests.

In the meantime the student body of Calvin Seminary is officially in the dark with respect to one of the most important pre-suppositions for theology, except for the imposed, partial, and negative interpretation by Synod 1959. That is confusing and not for the benefit of the churches, because a lack of scientific freedom seriously delimits the teaching and learning functions of the school.

That lack of scientific freedom is related to the significance of the crucial decision for the teaching also in the local churches.

A specific man-made interpretation of infallibility has an official, prevailing, not to say exclusive, position with respect to the explanation of the Scripture and the understanding of the Creed. That is why every local church, every minister, every elder, every member of the congregation is involved and should be concerned with this highly questionable method of Church government. The confession of the Church is *rationalized* when not the Scripture, but the human, scientific theological interpretation *prevails over* the Creed.

The ministry of the Word of God will become more and more affected as prospective ministers are bound in their training and examination to a *rational conception* of the Scripture that has to be accepted as having the same authority as the revelation itself.

It is to be hoped that the Study Committee will be able to draw up a unanimous report that will do justice to the divine character of the Holy Scripture and at the same time make clear the relativity of human understanding and of human theological conceptions with respect to the *mystery* of the revelation in human language.

The Distortion of Denominational Ideals: *Separatism*

by Simon J. De Vries

SEPARATISM IS A DISTORTION of a genuine Christian ideal. By becoming desired in itself, it destroys the virtue that may be present in the separation of one group of Christians from another.

Separation has often been glorified by people who are too cantankerous to put up with those who differ with them. These are people who can scarcely get along with their closest kin, to say nothing of those who are further removed. For them the bond of Christian fellowship has little meaning. Certainly the separatism that such people practice is an ideal only for the Kingdom of Darkness. This is separatism at its very worst.

But there is another motive for separation that aims at an ideal that is worthy in itself, the purity and the sanctity of the church. It is of this that I should prefer to write. Even this ideal is susceptible to misuse and distortion when it is absolutized into an end in itself, i.e., when it ignores another Christian ideal that is even more important, namely, the church community of love and brotherhood.

Once more we have an example of the tendency to oversimplification. One deal is adopted at the expense of another. The fact is that the maintenance of the church as Christ intended it is

no simple matter. The church here on earth exists in ambiguity. It is drawn in two opposite directions, striving after two seemingly contradictory ideals.

What is the church? It is the *fellowship* of *believers*. This means on the one hand that the church is the *one* Body of Christ, of which unity is the essential characteristic and in which love is the supreme motivation. This means on the other hand that the church is the witness and guardian of the Christian Gospel, in which loyalty to the *truth* is the greatest desideratum. The perfect harmonization of these two is to be obtained only in the church above. Here on earth the church is imperfect because its membership is imperfect. It is composed of unregenerate and regenerate sinners who come far short in their apprehension of Christian truth and who constantly fail in Christian charity.

Simply because the ideal is difficult and even (humanly) impossible to obtain here on earth, Christians have no excuse for abandoning the pursuit of it. Their failure to be perfect as God is perfect does not mean that they are not to continue striving after personal sanctification, nor is it a reason for not striving for the ideal church that "speaks the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). What is certainly needed, however, is a reasonable definition of the confessional basis of unity and a genuine tolerance in minor matters. If church members are aware of their own limitations in apprehending the truth, they will be more tolerant toward those with whom they differ. We finite and sinful saints are bound to disagree on many points. To disagree and to misunderstand are only human. Church members need to stand firmly against obvious perversions of the Gospel; but in the numerous minor questions that the Scriptures have not made entirely clear they need to remember that Christian love is more important than obtaining perfect agreement. If such agreement has to be obtained either through compulsion or through schism, the greater ideal of love has been sacrificed for the lesser ideal of uniformity.

IN THE ACTUAL HISTORY of the church this perspective has often been lost. Again and again a professed zeal for "the truth" and for "purity" has trampled under foot all considerations of tolerance, charity, and humility. The result has been repeated ruptures in Christ's Body.

It should be understood that such separations may be caused by either the majority or the minority party to a dispute. It has happened that the church as a whole has been tolerant and irenic but a small group within the church has demanded separation. It has also happened that the mother church has been so intolerant of minor differences that conscientious protestants have felt compelled to depart. Thus the chief fault has not always been with the separating group. The separatism of a despotic majority is as bad as the separatism of a hypercritical minority. In either case, the separatistic and schismatic spirit is identifiable by three marks: (1) uncharitableness toward differing opinions; (2) the lack of humility and self-criticism; and (3) the preference of division to compromise.

As we look back over the sad history of the church's fragmentation, we observe that in almost every case love has indeed been sacrificed for a lesser ideal, either by a domineering majority or by a fanatical minority. Naturally we cannot judge every separation alike. We will agree that the church was justified in rejecting Gnosticism, a complete perversion of the Gospel. Similarly it was right in repudiating the Arian heresy and other dangerous errors. A tolerance that becomes so all-important that it sacrifices the very Gospel is the most idolatrous absolutization of all! On the other hand, we cannot believe that the Roman Church was right in forcing the separation with the Eastern Orthodox, or in suppressing the Waldensians. Is it really the Eastern Church that is schismatic, as Rome says, or is it the other way around? Were the Waldensians the heretics or were the Papists? And how shall the Protestant Reformation be judged? Who were the real separatists, the Protestants who sincerely loved the one holy catholic church and who labored with longing and sometimes with almost too much tolerance for a return to the Gospel, or the domineering and intolerant hierarchy of Rome? We remember that Lutheranism did not become a separate church until the Pope had excommunicated Luther.

The Protestants were forced to separation through Roman Catholic apostasy and intransigence. The Reformation cannot be condemned as separatistic since it did not glorify the separation but greatly deplored it as a breach of the church's unity. Once the Reformers had taken this drastic step, however, they seemed to be psychologically prepared for the ready acceptance of other separations. Serious tensions arose within Protestantism, and wherever brotherhood and tolerance were lacking, even the need to present a united front against the Roman threat could not keep new splits from appearing. One of the most notable characteristics of Protestantism since the Reformation has been the regular appearance of new sects and counter-sects.

Some of the leading Reformers set a bad example. Luther, for instance, and Bullinger, were often excessively intolerant of those who differed with them. Calvin greatly deplored the narrowness of his fellow Reformers. He once wrote Bullinger, "Schism is of the devil!" He earnestly labored for understanding and brotherhood among Protestants

and even spent much fruitless effort in seeking a possible basis for reunion with Rome, as Dr. John Bratt has recently shown in his articles on "John Calvin and Ecumenicity" (*The Reformed Journal,* March and April, 1959).

One of the leading Calvin authorities, Dr. J. T. McNeill, has succinctly explained the Reformer's stand:

> It is a grave sin to depart from the fellowship of a true visible Church even though its doctrine be defective at nonessential points. Calvin observes that none of us is free from ignorance, and he distinguishes between essential principles — "such as, that there is a God, that Christ is the Son of God, that our salvation depends on the mercy of God" — and nonessential points. In the latter we should strive to have errors corrected, maintaining unity with those who hold them, and without disturbing the peace of the body . . . . With insistence and vehemence Calvin denounces the schismatic temper . . . . Paul did not break fellowship with the Corinthian church, even though many in it were corrupt both in morals and doctrine . . . . Only where the true faith is subverted and the true sacraments fail does separation become a duty (*The History and Character of Calvinism*, p. 215; cf. *Inst.* IV, i, 10-12).

IT IS NOT MY PURPOSE to enter further into the sad history of separatism. I have been trying to show what separatism is and is not, and to furnish us with a standard for understanding our own situation. It should be obvious that we have fallen short of the example of Calvin and still further short of the Biblical ideal. Schism and separatism have not only been persistent elements in our tradition, but it almost seems that some of us have accepted them as *ideals.*

The recent dispute over the Training College of Northern Nigeria has offered evidence of the separatism I regard as regrettable — the separatism that absolutizes "purity" at the expense of love and unity. Those who have insisted that our denomination must not co-operate in this united theological school upon the mission field have made the Christian Reformed definition of doctrinal purity the all-in-all before which every other consideration must bow. The fact is that we were not being asked to compromise with any of the enemies of the Gospel in Nigeria. It is not the aim of TCNN to co-operate with heathenism or Islam. We were simply being asked to join with other evangelical Christians in providing the high quality of theological training that the coming leaders of the Nigerian church must receive if they are to have an effective answer to the powerful forces that threaten them. We have tended to overlook the fact that our separatism is a stumbling-block to the fresh young Nigerian church. They are still so much in the joy of their Great Discovery that they want to embrace all who love their same Lord in the bond of brotherhood. Would that we still had that spirit! We ought to thank God that the Nigerian Christians do not want to perpetuate the woeful pattern of fragmentation that so long has been the grief and the shame of the church in Europe and America.

The greatest curse of separatism is that it multiplies itself in continuing acrimony, intolerance, dissension, and fragmentation. The *Afscheiding* breaks off from the State Church; the Christian Reformed break away from the Van Raalte group; the Protestant Reformed leave the Christian Reformed Church; the De Wolf faction secedes from Hoeksema; and so on and on. Where does the process stop? It is like atomic fission. Today you and I break off from the others; tomorrow you will secede from me or I from you. Separatists are never satisfied.

WE ARE ALL CONCERNED with the future of our denomination. It has the calling to be the true Church of Jesus Christ the Lord. This is what we sincerely desire it to be, but this desire should enlist us in an unceasing effort to keep it from ever becoming either apostate or a sect. A sect sets up false absolutes. A sect distorts true ideals. A sect oversimplifies the complexities of Christian living. A sect glorifies one aspect of religion and neglects the rest. A sect sees little wrong in itself and little good in others.

We all sincerely love our denomination, and in so far as our love is genuine we will pray and labor for the elimination of its faults. Thank God, there is still much hope because many do cherish the genuine ideals and resist the inroads of traditionalism, dogmatism, legalism, and separatism.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, all those who love the Christian Reformed Church ought to strive for a denominational program which invests the treasure of tradition in Christ's expanding Kingdom, which employs doctrine for a better understanding and more consistent application of the Word of God, which fulfills the Law in the servitude of love, and which earnestly labors for the unity of the church. In the measure that we succeed in realizing these true Christian ideals, we shall be worthy of being called the Church of Jesus Christ.

"We" in Modern Philosophy

by Jesse De Boer

MR. Michael B. Foster, late Student of Christ Church and Lecturer in Philosophy in the University of Oxford, did not produce a large volume of writings. Yet his publications deserve recognition as of the first importance by students of the relation of Christian teaching to critical stages in the development of modern Western culture. He wrote on two stages particularly: the early modern period marked by the rise of modern natural science, and the most recent developments among the leading philosophers (often called analytic or linguistic philosophers) in the English-speaking world. I shall only mention his first book, *The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel* (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1935), which is immensely valuable. Its fundamental instruments of interpretation, however, were employed already in articles appearing in *Mind* a bit earlier and concurrently. His three articles in *Mind* (October 1934, October 1935, and January 1936) contain the most useful analysis I have examined of the basic intellectual (in this case theological) background for each of the two traditions in Western culture respecting the possibility and the logical form of natural science, viz. that of classical Greek thought, and that of the great early modern natural scientists and philosophers. I may on a later occasion call attention to the thesis and arguments in these magnificent papers.

Recently Mr. Foster produced an essay called "'We' in Modern Philosophy," and a small book entitled *Mystery and Philosophy.* The book was published in 1957 by the Student Christian Movement (SCM) Press, Ltd., London, and is included in the new series known as *The Library of Philosophy and Theology,* edited by Alasdair MacIntyre and Ronald Gregor Smith. The essay is the final section of a collaborative volume entitled *Faith and Logic: Oxford Essays in Philosophical Theology* (edited by Basil Mitchell, published by George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1957).

I wish to present a summary of Mr. Foster's "'We' in Modern Philosophy," hoping to attract readers to it and to the book containing it. In his book on Plato and Hegel, Mr. Foster maintained that "there can be for us no genuine science of philosophy which is not based wholly on the study of the history of philosophy" (Preface). All his writings manifest a persistent application of this program. In a number of places he sought to show that one philosopher differs from another fundamentally in virtue of making this or that affirmation of belief, and that philosophical analysis has as one of its tasks the exhibiting of those belief-statements that constitute the starting point of philosophical elaboration.

In the present essay he begins with the fact that the leading philosophers today often appeal to what *we* do and do not say or to what *we* can and cannot say; and he proceeds to diagnose, to bring into the open how these philosophers conceive of the people referred to by their use of the word "we"—thus exhibiting the fundamental beliefs endorsed or embraced by modern philosophers and showing that these beliefs are logically in the same sphere with what we think of as a confession or affirmation of faith. Among the several philosophers who have been busy recently thinking about shifts in conceptions of the nature of philosophy and about the logical form of philosophical reasoning and arguments, Mr. Foster was one of the few who have worked to good effect at exploring the deep factors in the practice of contemporary philosophers in virtue of which they voice their commitments and beliefs.

I

THE essay has two parts. The first presents and interprets the fact that modern linguistic philosophers reason and argue by reference to what *we* say (i.e., by presenting "we sentences"); and it explores the sense in which such "we sentences" are important for philosophical analysis.

Let us see how linguistic philosophers use "we sentences." (Non-linguistic philosophers also do so, but their use will be considered later on.) From several examples given by Mr. Foster, I select only three. Professor A. J. Ayer: "The philosopher, as an analyst, is not directly concerned with the physical properties of things. He is concerned only with the way in which we speak about them." Mr. G. J. Warnock, in discussing whether there are shadows on the moon: "We do not in fact use the word 'exist' in talk about shadows." And Professor Gilbert Ryle: "Philosophers' arguments have frequently turned on references to what we do and do not say, or, more strongly, on what we can or cannot say."

It is very important to *understand* these "we sentences" (and to exert ourselves to see whether Foster interprets them correctly). He insists that they are not used as empirical statements, i.e., as reports on usage, on how we actually do speak. Professor Ryle remarks that philosophy is not

concerned with usage (which is a custom or vogue) or with prevalence. Foster quotes him as follows: ". . . appeal to prevalence is philosophically pointless." Besides, there is the consideration that if a philosopher offered a "we sentence" as an empirical statement or hypothesis he should have employed empirical methods (perhaps mass observation and statistical generalization); which he most certainly does not do, and would almost certainly regard as beyond his competence, off his territory: he is not a social scientist.

Foster suggests that "we sentences" are used somewhat like "performatory" utterances; more precisely, when a philosopher uses a "we sentence" he is subscribing to a practice, declaring his adhesion to it, he is "*owning* the usage." That is, he ranks himself as member of a group using words in a certain way, he adopts their way of speaking; and to do this is to *act*, it is not to describe something. Obviously this does not occur when a third-person utterance is offered. Just as, following the Oxford moral philosopher Mr. Hare, an ethical utterance would have lost something essential if it were used merely to describe and had no prescriptive or evaluative force; so a "we sentence" would have lost an essential element if it were used as a report, an empirical statement only. It would have lost its capacity to express the owning or avowal of an assertion. The philosopher should uncover what is being owned by use of a "we sentence," for here is the philosophical importance of such a sentence.

Professor Ryle was cited in support of one of Foster's points above; but it seems he would not support Foster's further suggestion about what qualifies a "we sentence" to be a subject of philosophical analysis and what makes it important. Ryle says that philosophy analyzes the *use* of a word or expression, not usage; and the use is a skill, a technique, what one must learn in order to operate with (in this case) a word, do something with it: as one has to learn the knack of using a screwdriver or ice pick. For Ryle, philosophy extracts or formulates the rules for using a word or expression, for operating with it. In answer, Foster tries to show that, while it is indeed true that philology, e.g., is not concerned merely with common practice but with standards of correct use, and while learning to use words correctly is like technical training, there is still a great difference between the proper use of a tool and the proper use of words or expressions. The proper use of a corkscrew is fixed and clear, though of course a person might use one to wedge a window; but is there a fixed unambiguous standard of propriety in the use of words? When a child learns to use "right" or "good" he receives moral as well as technical training; one could attain grammatical mastery of a language without using moral words correctly. A Hindu, a Marxist, and a scientific humanist could apply the same standards of linguistic propriety and still differ in use of moral terms. To learn the correct use of moral words one must be "initiated into the basic moral attitudes by which the use of the language is determined." Likewise with such words as "reasonable" and "real." Now, "we sentences" express a speaker's adoption of basic attitudes. Their doing so is what renders such expressions fit for philosophical analysis.

The verb "to mean," as logicians say nowadays, is an active verb: not that words mean a fixed concept but that *people* mean things by the use of words. It is possible to be unauthentic: to use words without fully meaning what is said by using them. But when one is honest he discards what he cannot own or adhere to, he asserts only what he can commit himself to in good faith. This act of commitment is expressed in a "we sentence." Now, as the standard for the proper use of moral words is participation in or adoption of a set of basic moral principles, so the standard for the correct commitment to basic beliefs expressed in "we sentences" is internal to adoption, not prior to it. The adoption is primary: a man's act of adoption, voiced by a "we sentence," shows what he can adopt, and it is what makes his assertion both important for philosophy and more than a mere historical statement.

Analysis proceeds from the act of adoption; it can elaborate, bring more fully to realization what the adoption involves, it clarifies but does not initiate the adoption. Hence, when philosphers are found to disagree (especially philosophers of different ages), their differences are almost surely not a matter of more or less technical (logical) skill, as though concepts (meanings) are fixed and identical for all, and we now know exactly what Plato was trying to analyze and can avoid his logical errors; what we need to do *first* is to uncover his commitments, his affirmations. Does this mean that criticism becomes logically unwarranted (as Collingwood seemed to think, with his talk of "absolute presuppositions")? We cannot criticize solely from the vantage point of technical superiority: criticism "will require us to reveal our own presuppositions and to confront the others with them, committing ourselves in witness."

II

IN the second part of his essay Mr. Foster seeks to uncover the basic affirmations voiced by modern philosophers in their use of "we sentences." He begins by remarking on examples of such expressions offered by non-linguistic philosophers. Pro-

fessor G. E. Moore, e.g., has often endorsed what he calls the views of Common Sense: one example: "All this we now believe about the material universe: it is surely Common Sense to believe it all." Foster comments that (1) these are like the "we sentences" of linguistic philosophers: Moore in fact often appeals to how we use certain key words; and that (2) they resemble "creedal affirmations": Moore over and over says, "We believe," "I claim to know," "We all of us believe"; and if we do not approach these expressions with a narrow preconception it is plain that they voice affirmations of belief.

Now let us attend to the fact that these sentences employ the *plural number*, "we." "We sentences" are indicative, though not indicatives of empirical fact; when I say "we believe . . ." I place myself in the ranks of those who believe in a certain way, and doing this is an act, not a description. Who are the "we"? Philosophers differ on the answer. One might want to say that to use "we" is to mean a specified (empirically delimited) group, e.g., "we neo-Kantians" or "we positivists": but this mode of use is reserved particularly for a party manifesto or a declaration of a moral code or program, and it would have little importance for philosophy. "We" is used in philosophical discussion, accordingly, to refer to no specified group, whether like-minded philosophers, or English-speaking people, or men of the twentieth century; if it were so used, the philosopher would be making only an empirical statement and might be shown wrong by empirical tests. Instead it is used to refer to *mankind as a whole.* This was recognized by Moore, and by Ryle in his observation that the *use* of "cause" is the same as that of *"Ursache."* "We" means "we men": and not as an empirical concept, for philosophers do not offer laws in empirical anthropology.

Foster stresses the two points (1) that the philosopher's "we sentences" do not make empirical statements, and (2) that his choice of such sentences reveals "what he believes a man to be." For Kant, to be a man is to be a rational being, member of an intelligible world though bound to physical nature: this is a form of spiritualism. Moore has a very different affirmation about man; he cannot honestly affirm faith in a spiritual anthropology. He affirms a new form of humanism: not that of the older British empiricism, where to be a man is to share in human nature as a universal character or timeless essence, but the new affirmation that man is a member of "a race fulfilling its destiny in history."

This notion of man as an historical entity is shown by the recent use of *tensed verbs*: Moore's "we *now* believe," or the "we now know" in reference to Copernican cosmology as an increase in human knowledge, or again *"we do not now believe* that he [Jesus] was the son of God and of a virgin, or that he rose from the dead" (quoted from a radio talk). Here the "we" refers to mankind, not a particular class (e.g., we modern educated Western men); if it did, the "now" would be incorrect: the use of "now" implies that we who now know are the same as those who in the past did not know.

And though these "we sentences" speak of man as historical, they are not historical statements: the philosopher is not an historian offering empirical evidence or inviting tests by empirical methods. They are "logically homogeneous with theological statements; . . . they can contradict theological statements and be contradicted by them." Reichenbach's use of "we sentences" to affirm that man can trust his rules and volitions though they are not commands from another source (God) is in a class with (and does it not contradict?) the doctrine of Original Sin and the Biblical statement that Christ judges the will of man. Mr. P. F. Strawson's thesis that predicates are incompatible with one another because we decide that they be so, is perhaps like the statements in *Genesis* that Adam ("Adam" means man) gave names to the animals.

WHAT is the basic affirmation about man found in British philosophy today? Mr. Foster suggests that while Continental philosophy has believed for a long time that man in "mind or spirit (or mind linked with matter or spirit linked with nature)," British empiricism (both the older and the current form) has affirmed that "we are men." Descartes uses an "I sentence," but his thesis that I am a thinking substance is an existential affirmation, not an empirical statement. Descartes affirms that he is "mind or spirit, naturally immortal, and claiming solidarity with the timeless and infinite substance of mind as such." Kant's philosophy is spiritual, not human: the moral law binds us *qua* rational, i.e. *qua* spiritual beings who are members of an intelligible society of spirits. For Kant our will as intelligence is "our proper self." He says that man "as a human being . . . is merely an appearance of himself." By the time of John Stuart Mill the new historical humanism is familiar, at least in Britain: to be a man is not to possess a character; the concept "man" is not a class-concept, it indicates membership in "a race fulfilling its destiny in history."

In epistemology Kant affirms the spirituality of the self: it is distinct from nature, gives laws to it, and has solidarity with consciousness as such. The shift from this to historical humanism is well exhibited by an early paper (1922) by professor C. I. Lewis, "The Pragmatic Conception of the A

Priori." For Lewis, the *a priori* is chosen by man, it is a set of stipulations or attitudes which might have been different if this suited our need or bent; the categories, besides being chosen, have altered in history; logical laws are only in degree more permanent than laws in physics: we might have had a rule requiring a tripartite division instead of the law of excluded middle. Professor Lewis repudiates the notion that the *a priori* is to be conceived in terms of absolute mind or a universal human nature; he exhibits the transition "from a timeless deduction to a temporal story, and from a spiritualist metaphysics to humanism. The categories of thought are not eternal but are subject to change, the changes take place in history, and this history is human history."

What is taking the place of the old metaphysics? Humanism, Foster calls it. He stresses that it is no more empirical than what it displaces: the decisions referred to by the humanist story are not such as can be dated or can have been taken by any man; and no empirical evidence could verify or falsify the story of their occurrence. It would be odd to call the new outlook "humanist metaphysics." Perhaps "humanist myth" is better, for "myth" suggests a temporal story which is still not subject to empirical verification. But myths are usually unrelated to history, while humanism "supplies a key for the understanding of history." Besides, the humanist "meta-history" tells a story which is very hard to take lightly: hence the force of the "we sentences."

At any rate, and this is Foster's conclusion, the affirmations of the contemporary humanist are logically homogeneous with theological assertions; they offer a theological anthropology. It seems paradoxical to call this outlook a theology; for it is without God. Nevertheless, if atheists and theists contradict each other they can both be called theologians. Though "atheist theologian" looks like a self-contradiction, and "theist theologian" looks like a tautology, it is necessary to point out that both talk about the same topics.

III

I conclude by setting out Mr. Foster's chief theses as follows.

(1) The "we sentences" of linguistic philosophers are used by them not as reports or empirical assertions, but as avowals, as signaling their *owning* of a given way of speaking. Philosophers are not engaged in the kind of inquiry pursued by social scientists.

(2) Unlike tools or implements, whose use is fixed and easily determined, there are certain words which have a correct use relative to a speaker's sharing in the basic attitudes of a group. A "we sentence" signals a man's commitment, his act of adopting a basic attitude. And it is one task of philosophy to uncover the attitudes endorsed by philosophers when they use "we sentences." Their "we sentences" are philosophically important, not as historical statements, but as acts of endorsement or adoption.

(3) Philology studies the standards of linguistic propriety, how a language is spoken by people who speak it well. There is no external standard, no criterion apart from a man's adopting a basic belief or principle, whereby to criticize that act of adoption. A man adopts what he can honestly adopt, what he can subscribe to.

(4) The use of the *plural* in "we sentences" invites a question about who it is that the philosopher alludes to in his "we sentence." The "we" can be no group short of mankind, and the "we sentence" does not describe the group or merely state a fact about it. Once again, the philosopher is not an anthropologist or historian.

(5) The above question leads to another: how does a philosopher conceive of man? What is it to be a man? It can be shown that Plato, Descartes or Kant entertained a notion about what it is to be a man that explains much in the metaphysics or world-view of each, a notion that is rarely adhered to today by linguistic or non-linguistic philosophers.

(6) The peculiar shift that has become evident through analysis of the "we sentences" of contemporary philosophers is the shift from an older (usually spiritualist) metaphysics to a new humanism. This pictures man as an historical entity, changing in time its categories and logical principles, and no longer appealing to God in support of moral rules or values. Yet the humanist story, while offering a key for understanding history, is not itself a piece of history; the key "events" alluded to by it are not susceptible of verification or falsification by historical investigation. Hence it is logically homogeneous with theological doctrine. The humanist is not devoid of his own peculiar species of acts of faith.

A New Frontier for the Minister

by Earl Jabay

IN THIS ARTICLE I should like to describe a new and large frontier that is opening up to the minister. I can, however, only say what it means *to me,* for I speak as a student who has received what is usually regarded as the "full course" of clinical training rather than as one who is offering such training. Among the needs that prompt me to write this article are (1) the natural desire to share a significant experience with others; (2) the need to communicate to the church the availability of a type of training that can be of immeasurable value to its ministry; and (3) the relative unfamiliarity of many clergymen with this new frontier in theological education.

Clinical Pastoral Education is a type of education offered to seminarians, parish ministers, and institutional chaplains. It is both novel and needful. Normally, we think of education as the process of communicating facts to a student, who is expected to have the ability to integrate what he has absorbed, "handle" the facts, make judgments, and enlarge his viewpoint. All this is done in an intellectual and academic fashion. The student may hate the professor, contemplate suicide or perhaps homicide, have homosexual thoughts, be worrying about his bleeding ulcer and have intense anxiety about entering his profession, but if the student is adept in concealing all these problems, does his work and passes his exams, he is acceptable to the academic community. Indeed, the educator may reward this student with high honors.

Let us suppose that our honor student is a graduate seminarian. He allows himself to be carried forward by the course of events and now finds himself in a parish. He is well-equipped to conjugate Greek and Hebrew verb-forms, but he finds himself continually waging war with his consistory, and things are getting worse. He knows much about the preparation and delivery of a sermon, but he is so depressed lately that he cannot begin on his sermon until late on Saturday. He has learned much about the Biblical characters and he likes them, but the people in his parish give him a pain in the stomach.

What has happened? It seems that our troubled pastor has had a good intellectual training — and, most emphatically, he needs that — but nothing was done to "educate" his emotions. Emotionally, he is an eighth-grader; intellectually, a bachelor of divinity and maybe more.

Seminary professors, clergymen, and countless unfortunate parishioners have always lamented this sad state of affairs in the parish ministry, but all have felt that little could be done about it. Until lately, they were right. But now some real help is on the way in the form of the clinical pastoral training movement. I want now to tell you a bit about the movement as it has come to expression particularly in the Council for Clinical Training.

THE MOVEMENT BEGAN around 1925 in New England. The largest figure in that early period was Dr. Anton T. Boisen, a clergyman of the Congregational Christian Church, who began training theological students in the Worcester State Hospital of Massachusetts. Out of these early efforts have grown two national, interdenominational training agencies, the smaller being the Institute of Pastoral Care, which offers training in eight general hospitals and eight mental hospitals. The larger is the Council for Clinical Training with twenty-five mental hospitals, nine general hospitals, seven correctional institutions, and six specialized institutions. Both organizations have agreed upon the following four goals: (1) to enable the student to gain a fuller understanding of people, their deeper motivations and difficulties, their emotional and spiritual strengths and weaknesses; (2) to help the student discover more effective methods of ministering to individuals and groups, and to intensify his awareness of the unique resources, responsibilities, and limitations of the clergy; (3) to help the student learn to work more co-operatively with representatives of the other professions and to utilize community resources that may lead toward more effective living; (4) to further the knowledge of problems met in pastoral care by providing opportunities for relevant and promising research.

These goals are implemented by means of training programs that are carried on in accredited mental hospitals, general hospitals, and penal institutions. For an institution to be accredited, it must have sufficient people with whom to work, a qualified professional staff and, not least, a "teacher" of the program, who is called a chaplain supervisor. But stranger teachers you have never seen, for it is unusual to hear them lecture; they find no shelter on a seminary campus; very few receive any salary for their services; they carry their heaviest load during the summer when the seminarians come for three months of training; they offer no degrees. Chaplain supervisors are ordained men who have had some parish experience as well as intensive clinical and psycho-therapeutic training. To his students he functions as a pastoral counselor and

confidant, as one who holds up a mirror for the student to see as much of himself as he is able to see, as a benevolent Socrates who is always raising questions. The purpose is always the same, always one, always difficult to formulate, but perhaps it has most to do with teaching a person how to love and be loved in inter-personal relationships.

YOU MAY BE INTERESTED in hearing a bit about what goes into a rather typical three-month clinical training program at a mental hospital. The student is assigned a ward as his parish. He is expected to labor by the hour on the ward — learning about his patients by listening to them, getting close to their feelings, learning the role of a pastor with a sick person and, most important, observing himself in relationship to his patients. The student will frequently see two patients outside his parish for intensive work. Verbatim reports of the counseling sessions are submitted to the supervisor, who helps the student to see not only his own motivations and needs but the dynamics of the person counseled. There are also group sessions composed of the group (usually six students) and the supervisor. Here the student's personal and inter-personal feelings are shared. The supervisor is always available to the student for private sessions. Selected reading assignments are discussed in the group. There are seminars by psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and other members of the hospital staff. Each student must conduct a worship service. This service is recorded and later discussed. And then, with what strength is left, a final evaluation is made by everyone, on everyone, to everyone.

The emphasis in this type of training is clinical rather than academic, focusing upon the emotions rather than the intellect. Some may therefore think that clinical training is for the emotionally ill seminarian. In the early years of the movement there were seminary professors who took this position. Happily, many seminaries have come to see value in clinical training for the relatively healthy as well as for the maladjusted student. Indeed, some of the finests fruits of training have come to men of promise who have been made all the stronger through the clinical experience.

SOME OF THE THINGS that happen as a result of clinical training are quite dramatic. Every student I have talked with has had positive feelings about the course, and with a number there is the feeling "that I have entered a new world," "that a strange calm and peace has come to me," "that God has suddenly become real to me." Clinical training does not always "take," but when it does, here are a few of the things that begin to happen.

First, the trainee takes a look at himself, not infrequently, for the first time in his life. He may have originally sought clinical training to learn about the relationship between religion and psychiatry, or to learn, if he is in a parish, how to deal with some of his impossible parishioners. But sooner or later he must stand before a mirror. He may close his eyes to what he sees; he is free to do this; but clinical training remains the opportunity to look at himself. Looking at one's self, however, cannot be done except in relationship with the people in one's environment. It is for this reason that the supervisor constantly focuses on the multiple inter-personal relationships of his students. The question is always, "What is going on?" between the student, the fellow students, the patients, the staff and the supervisor.

Clinical training can also bring the trainee to a new sensitivity of feeling. It is strange how we can forget how to feel love, anger, compassion, and guilt, to mention only a few emotions. The capacity to feel is marked by a growing defenselessness. The well-defended personality encounters an atmosphere in both individual and group sessions where some of the poorer defense mechanisms can be exchanged for good ones and where the useless ones can be discarded. True, a three-month program can mean only a small beginning of change of attitude and feeling, but there seems to be an "urge toward health" in the human personality, and this urge eventually magnifies even the smallest gains. What good this may mean for hundreds of future parishioners is simply beyond calculation.

It is not uncommon that students speak of clinical training as a religious experience, and such it can be. There is something about the close interpersonal relationship between the trainee, fellow trainees, and the supervisor that sets the stage for the person-to-Person experience. In deeply finding ourselves in the presence of others we venture more boldly into communion with the Other. And then, feeling the love, understanding, and acceptance of God and fellow man, we begin properly to love, understand, respect and accept ourselves. Finally, as Dr. Carl Jung has observed, we begin to obey the Biblical injunction to love our (greatest) enemy — ourself.

The trainee also learns something about counseling, as I tried to show in my former article. Real progress is made if the trainee begins to learn how not to harm the patient. Another advance is made when the trainee learns how to listen creatively. Still more is learned when the counselor becomes aware of his own feelings and wisely handles them. This is a good beginning in the difficult art of being a pastoral counselor to those in crisis.

Book Reviews

A MESSAGE TO CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS by Oscar Cullmann. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959, 57 pp., $1.50.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The proposal advanced in this small book has been receiving some attention among both Protestants and Roman Catholics. We thought our readers might like to know how the proposal looks to a Protestant and a Roman Catholic, and we are therefore placing the following two reviews. The first review is by MATTHEW K. CLARKE, a Roman Catholic who is an Instructor in English at Kent State University and who has specialized in American Culture at Western Reserve University. The second review is by DIRK JELLEMA, a Calvinist who is Assistant Professor of History at Case Institute of Technology and who has specialized in late medieval and contemporary history.

I

by Matthew K. Clarke

Dr. Cullmann's message to Catholics and Protestants is that they institute a program of giving to each other's charitable groups with official representatives of both groups involved, as a sign of unity in Christ, and as a method of developing Protestant-Catholic dialogue.

This plan is similar to the technique of early Christians who made such offerings to resolve their differences in doctrine by acts of love, but is unlike it in that they did so to manifest their unity in one Church. Since it is precisely on the nature of the Church that Protestants and Catholics disagree, Cullmann states that his proposal would not be interpreted to mean the same thing. The official representatives of both confessions would see to it that no difficulties of a spiritual or material nature arise in executing the plan and that no one be expected to make any concessions. Basel already has such a group sanctioned by the proper authorities, and previous to this, Cullmann's plan was executed by individuals.

Much of the book is devoted to a discussion of objections and answers to them in Cullmann's most unexceptionable and charitable manner. The great advantage of his plan to this writer's mind is that it involves action for Christian unity. The greatest theoretical objection is that such action assumes a unity that is as yet undefined and ambiguous, especially, perhaps, from the point of view of the Roman Catholic.

For him, what kind of "unity in Christ" can exist outside the communion of the visible Church? He must consider such unity to be almost purely verbal in that both groups claim to follow Christ.

For those who are not troubled about the scandal of separation between Christians, this may provide an apparently valid objection. For those with a personal involvement or interest, however, the small risk is an obviously needed and reasonable prerequisite that can easily be taken by a person of competency and normal courage. In the United States, however, the dialogue has not yet reached even this degree of advancement. As Father Weigle pointed out last year in an issue of the protestant publication *Christianity and Crisis*, only a very few Catholics at any level are aware of, much less interested in, Protestantism. It cannot be expected then that any significant number of American Catholics will become mature enough in the near future to plumb the depths of their own spirituality in such a way that they realize Protestantism has something to contribute to its perfection. Nonetheless the effect of one man's calling can be great.

For those who see the beliefs of their separated Christian brethren as a personal challenge in the development of their own spirituality, Cullmann's book will have great attraction. He is widely respected in Catholic and Protestant theological circles; here he has made another valuable contribution, the more valuable in that it calls for *action*, for it is such conscious action that forms and perfects and disposes, and does so in a way that discussion can never encompass.

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II

by Dirk Jellema

Oscar Cullmann, a leading Protestant eologian in Europe, has been deeply volved in the European discussions "dialogue") between Protestant and atholic theologians. The extent of is dialogue is little known here: merican Calvinists, for example, know ttle of the dialogue between Dutch alvinist theologians at the Free Uni-ersity and their Catholic counterparts Louvain, which has been going on r some years. Cullmann's proposal, this book, is related to this European ialogue, but is of a practical nature: atholic and Protestant might express eir common belief in the Triune God, eir undefined "unity," by giving gifts love to needy organizations or chari-es among their "separated brethren." his, he suggests, would help (as much anything in this situation) make a eginning towards mitigating the un-hristian divisions within the body of hristian believers. He gives Biblical rguments for his appeal, and it is fficult to disagree with the force of his reasoning. The plan has already met with some success in Europe, with lay response more enthusiastic than clerical, by and large. Cullmann prints a letter from a Swiss Reformed church which tells of the great spiritual benefits it received from contributing to the charities of its separated Catholic brethren.

Cullmann is well aware of the important differences between the Roman Catholic and Protestant outlooks, and sees the essential difference in the opposing views on the nature of the Church, and more specifically, whether obedience to Rome is necessary for the Church. This would, indeed, seem to be the key difference. Though Cullmann notes various recent Catholic contributions to dialogue (e.g., Bouillard, Kung and others, which seem to a Protestant to be a long-delayed recognition of the truth of the Protestant idea of justification), he feels that this key difference makes any organic union impossible, and that thus his practical proposal for action is the sort of thing which must now be done.

Some brief comments might be made on this short, clearly-written and provocative book. First: this country is far behind Europe in the development of dialogue, which was furthered there by common participation in Resistance movements, among other things. Thus, perhaps, more dialogue is first needed here. Second: this country is far behind Europe in other types of cooperation, such as the Calvinist-Catholic cooperation in the Dutch labor movement. Such cooperation might be feasible here in several areas (parochial schools, race relations, etc.). Third: the great danger which Catholics and Protestants together face is not Communism, as in Europe, but an emergent "American religion" of "so long as you believe sincerely, any belief is as good as any other." Thus, the strategy of cooperation will perhaps differ.

In summary: to all those who have read Paul ("we were all baptized into one body") or pondered Christ's "by this will all men know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another," Cullmann's little book will be most interesting reading.

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CHARLES M. LAYMON, experienced teacher, minister, author, and editor, received his B.A. degree from Ohio Wesleyan, and his S.T.B. and Th.D. from the Boston University School of Theology. He has studied at Harvard and the University of Edinburgh.

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LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

SIRS:

Rev. Leonard Verduin in his article entitled "Karl Barth's Rejection of Infant Baptism" supports Barth's argument that infant baptism became the general practice of the church in the latter half of the fourth century "when, with the 'conversion' of Emperor Constantine, Church and Empire had coalesced." The church practiced infant baptism in order to promote Constantinianism or the idea of the "Volkskirche." This idea gave rise to Donatism. This sect did not want a "State-Church," but a church which was a society of believers and of them only. For this reason Donatism rejected infant baptism as the means to support the "Volkskirche."

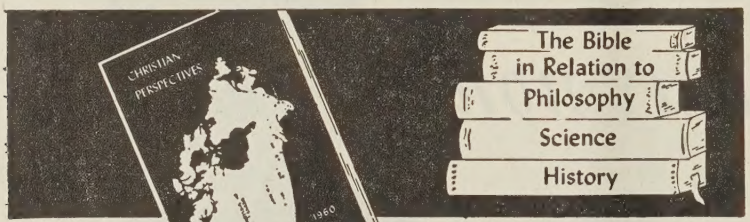
The same happened, according to Barth and Verduin, in the age of the Reformation. After a little while the Reformers fell back into the sin of Constantinianism. They, too, saw infant baptism as a means to promote this sin. The Neo-Constantinianism of the Reformers gave rise to Anabaptism and also the anti-pedobaptism of this sect was the direct result of their rejection of the "Volkskirche."

My esteemed collegue states that "Barth is, in the main, on good historic ground throughout." As to the early church he tries to demonstrate this with a remark out of Prof. Frend's book *The Donatist Church* and with some words of the German theologian Harnack. As to the Reformers, Verduin uses his well-known theory regarding the Reformation and Anabaptism for which he appeals to his "sources." He thinks it surprising that Reformed writers on the continent, such as Prof. Berkouwer, assail Barth's construction of history in this respect. And I cannot help but laugh when my good colleague suggests that men like Berkouwer so strongly refuse to go along with Barth's argument because of "a lingering loyalty to Constantinianism and its 'Volkskirche'." Finally, Verduin is happy that there still is the First Amendment of the Federal Constitution of the U.S.A. "as an effective deterrent for any creation of a 'Volkskirche' on these shores."

What to say about such an article? In the first place, I am happy that in the same copy of the *Reformed Journal* was the excellent article by Harry Hutchison, "Infant Baptism and the Early Church."

Secondly, it is contrary to fact that Barth's *most important* argument against infant baptism is, as Verduin suggests, Constantinianism and its "Volkskirche" of the early church and of the Reformers. This historic argument only stems from a more serious and basic one, namely, that Barth h another, i.e., an unscriptural conceptic about the relation between faith ar baptism, and the O.T. dispensation the covenant and the N.T. dispensatio and natural and spiritual birth. Bar does not believe that God, in the N. dispensation as well as in the O. works throughout the generations the believers. The relationship betwe believing parents and their children the N.T. church is of no importance to the adoption of children by Go As to this, only the spiritual birth important. That is the very reason wh Barth teaches that baptism of infants the N.T. church is illegitimate. Alo this line Barth arrives at his histor argument, as mentioned above.

Thirdly, Prof. Berkouwer assails Bar strongly, but not because of a "linge ing loyalty to Constantinianism and 'Volkskirche'." He does not even fi Barth's historic argument against infa baptism too important, although states that Barth's representations r garding Constantinianism "have no co tact with historic fact" and in n opinion Hutchison's article in the *R formed Journal* is in harmony with th remark of Berkouwer. Berkouwer's a tack, however, is principally direct against Barth's main argument, namel his misconception regarding the cov nant of grace and the relation betwe faith and baptism. And I think it to a masterly attack and at the same tin an attack thoroughly scriptural. Let ministers read the chapter about infa baptism in Berkouwer's book *T Sacraments.*



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Finally, Verduin has an advice for those "European theologians." He is the one who has discovered "a serious chink in Barth's armor." What is that chink? I quote: "Barth himself grants, constantly, that the practice of infant baptism antedates the rise of Constantinianism; therefore to reject Constantinianism entails no more than a return to infant baptism as practiced in pre-Constantinian times." Verduin's advice for the European theologians (he must mean Prof. Berkouwer, the only one he quotes) is that "they would concentrate their attack upon him [Barth] right here, where he is weak, and deal less roughly with him as to his delineation of history, where he is strong." This is poor advice in my humble opinion. Thirteen years ago already, in his *Barth and Infant Baptism* and six years ago, in his *The Sacraments* Berkouwer concentrated his attack upon Barth's teachings regarding infant baptism on the best possible point and on the most serious chink, namely, his unscriptural doctrine regarding the significance of the covenant of grace for the N. T. church. This is the same point on which the Reformers attacked the Anabaptists, who, like Barth, did not believe that the infants "as well as adults are included in the covenant and church of God" and therefore "must be ingrafted into the Christian Church by baptism, as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision."

ABRAHAM B. C. HOFLAND

REPLY

From his letter I get the impression that Rev. Holfland is not exactly enthusiastic over what I have written. This lack of enthusiasm could be the result of a mistaken notion as to what my article sought to do. Rev. Hofland reacts as though I had set myself to explore the total area of Barth's reflections on infant baptism; and I can well understand that he thinks my paper doesn't do that job very well. I am hopeful that if Rev. Hofland will take into consideration just what it is I try to do in the article in question he will be able to stop laughing.

As everyone knows, Barth has assailed infant baptism from several points of view; from the historical perspective, from the doctrinal, from the exegetical; and one could perhaps enumerate still others. In my article I have confined myself to the first-named; I have not so much as touched upon Barth's argument from exegesis, for instance; and I narrowed down the coverage in this way for the simple but quite sufficient reason that I do not think I have any particular competence in the other areas.

Moreover, I think to have made it plain, at the outset, what area my article was to cover. I wrote there that Barth's rejection of infant baptism stems "in a large way" from his experience with Nazism and the constructions of history that followed upon this experience; and to this coverage my article holds itself. The words "in a large way" imply that there were other "ways," even other "large ways," which I leave to one side. That my piece selects the "way" of history and holds to this selection consistently is apparent from Rev. Hofland's own summary, given at the beginning of his letter; in this summary only historical matters find a place.

To spell it out, my thesis in my article is that the record of history goes far to support Barth's assertion that there is a causal connection between commitment to Constantinianism and an enlarged interest in pedobaptism. This thesis I am prepared to defend. If Rev. Hofland has anything to say in opposition to this thesis I shall be extremely happy to be apprised of it.

With this I send greetings across the Blue Water Bridge, to my neighbor; and I thank him for being so kind as to read my contribution.

Yours as ever,
LEONARD VERDUIN

SIRS:

Permit me to give vent to an urge to comment on a statement in "Ecumenicity and the Mission Field" in the March issue of *The Reformed Journal.* In relating the Apostles Creed to his subject, the author makes this statement:

> "The people who say that the unity of the Church comes to sufficient expression in the spiritual unity that exists among believers transfer the reference of the unity, probably without realizing it, from the article of the Creed which confesses, 'I believe a holy catholic Church' to the article which reads 'the communion of saints.' "

Could it be that the Rev. Mr. Boer is making two articles, probably realizing it fully, where only one exists in fact?

Sincerely yours,
MARION VOS

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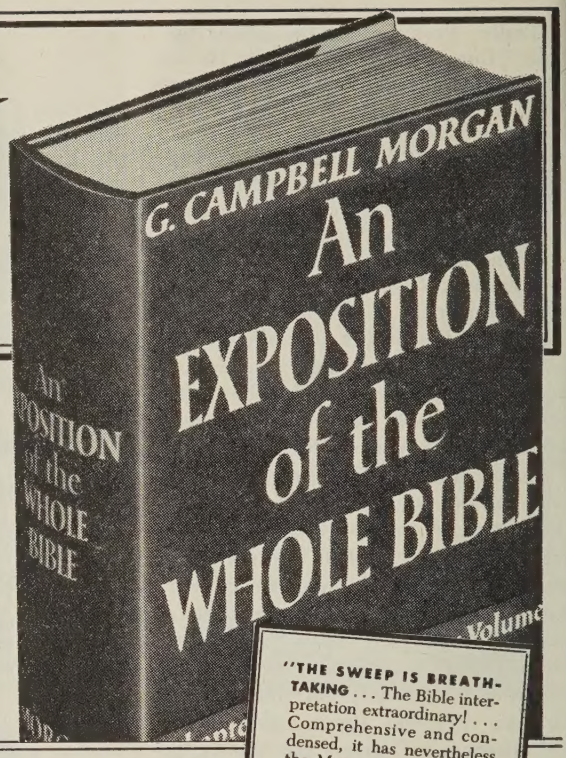

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